Sample game applications in social studies teaching

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Abstract

In this study where game has been used as a method of teaching in the social studies lesson, the concepts of game and educational game in socials studies teaching have been emphasized and the impact of games on the development of the child has been discussed. The sample of the study consists of 80 students. Two sample applications selected by the researchers among 20 games, which are both unique and considered to be suitable for the social studies lesson. The selected applications have been examined in two sections in terms of form and content. Student opinions have been included in the evaluation section. The collected data have been examined through the documentary review technique.

Keywords: social studies teaching, game, educational game, teacher candidates.

1. Introduction

Social Studies teaching has existed formally and informally since beginning of humanity. Experiences obtained from life and experience and knowledge transferred among humans since the first age can be considered to be parts of social sciences. For instance, a father teaching his son hunting in order to stay alive, a mother demonstrating to her daughter how to sew or learning acquired by an individual through interaction with others are under the scope of the field of social studies. This is defined by Sönmez (1999, p. 17) as “Social sciences is a part of life and dynamic information obtained as a result of experiences acquired in life”. The theme and content determined in the Social Studies program is integrated with the concepts of knowledge, skill, value, and citizenship. The objectives of social studies in primary education have been determined as acquiring humanity’s past, present, and future experience knowledge, developing thinking skills, democratic value and attitudes, and ensuring further social participation. The objectives determined for Social Studies teaching have been defined differently at different times. The objective of Social Studies teaching in Turkey has been defined by Özoğul in 1974 as having students develop a positive world view and attitudes expected and required by society and acquire required knowledge and skills (cited by: Demircioğlu, 2007, p. 12). Paykoç (1991, p. 7) expresses it as being the acquisition of six qualities and skills, which are personality development, human affairs, economic efficiency, civic responsibility, coping with change and life, and utilizing knowledge in order to get to know the universe, world, and the nation. According to Öztürk (2009, p. 28), the objectives of social studies must be discussed in 2 aspects consisting of universal and national objectives. Both objectives must be dealt with under the 4 titles of knowledge, skill, attitude, and value-social participation. Bilgili (2009, p. 5) has discussed the objective of social studies teaching under the following 3 dimensions:1. to convey the cultural heritage and values of the society they live in to children, to ensure that they are

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good citizens and individuals, 2. to have students acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values by providing them information on universal and national values and fundamental social establishments, 3. to develop the individual and social problem identification, analysis and decision making processes of students.

Thus, it is possible to express the objectives of social studies as “raising citizens, who are aware of cultural diversity, can make logical decisions, are concerned with historical and cultural heritage at a national and universal level and whose information collection skills are developed”. In order to raise individuals that comply with these objectives and have students become individuals that satisfy the requirements of our age, the teaching, method, technique, and strategies used in lessons are of great significance. In the information age, the teaching methods, techniques, and strategies utilized in social studies teaching should be diversified and teaching settings should be maintained in a rich manner. In this context, social studies teachers should ensure that students structure knowledge by providing them with practice, experiment, and exploration opportunities rather than “Traditional Lecturing” (Demircioğlu, 2007, p. 169-170). The concept of teaching through games in social studies teaching can be considered as an effective teaching method in having students explore and restructure information and get prepared for life. Life consists of a game for children. The child’s own play area is like a boldly outlined garden for the child. The child, who certainly does not permit interference in this area, plays with his/her own rules. And s/he refuses to have friends, who fail to comply with these rules, participate in the game. This characteristic of games, teaches them to comply with rules. The child, who learns to comply with rules in the game, shall also comply with rules of society in the future. In this context, many behaviors that are wished to be demonstrated by the student at primary education level, can be achieved by having the student acquire them through games.

Games, which are as old as human history and have such a significant function, is work for children and the child learns, develops, and socializes with games. The individual, who expands his/her field of interaction, takes the first steps to expressing him/herself, acknowledging or having others acknowledge that s/he is an individual, being aware of the freedom of expression, and self realization through socializing. Educators have defined games in various aspects. These definitions in a sense explain the common characteristics of games. It can be said that these definitions are definitions that complement and support one another. Games, which are considered to be “an art of learning” by many experts, is the most natural learning setting of the child and provides the child the opportunity to learn subjects that no one can teach through his/her own experience (Poyraz, 2003; Yıldız, 1997, p. 549). Games are an activity that prepares the child for life. Owing to games, the child develops his/her motor skills and averts tensions by consuming his/her excess energy. In addition to all these characteristics, games assist the socialization of children (Aydın, 2005, p. 149). Many definitions have been made on games till present. Considering these definitions, games can be called the basic material of personality covering intelligence, skill, socialization, learning, and similar values (Uluğ, 2007, p. 17,18).

1.1. Game Teaching

In addition to the importance and definition of games, conveying it to the education setting and applying it in this setting is as important as the game. At this point, we encounter “the concept of educational game”. Students of the 4th and 5th grades of primary education are aged 10-12 years old and are in the transitional period from the concrete operations stage to the abstract operations stage. In this period, it is necessary to concretize subjects through various active learning techniques in order to have individuals, who still think in a concrete manner, learn abstract concepts without having to recite them (Şaşmaz & Erduran, 2004, p. 68). According to Açıkgöz (2006), one of the active learning techniques is educational games. According to Demirel, Seferoğlu, and Yağcı (2003), educational games are “programs that enable students to learn lesson subjects or develop their problem solving skills by utilizing game formats”.

According to Senemoğlu (1998, p. 391) with the focus of student’s attention and selective perception on the subject and the student maintaining the effort to learn, the level of learning is increased. Thus, guiding activities to be conducted during learning should ensure both intentional learning and coincidental learning by guiding attention and selective perception. Furthermore, learning socialization, comprehending sex roles in a social setting, learning to respect rights and liberties of others and protect one’s own rights and liberties, learning cooperation, solidarity, sharing, and working together, learning and practicing rules of good manners, learning to protect and not to harm
1.2. Stages of Game Teaching

For games planned in the teaching process an arrangement should be made by considering the levels of availability, skills, interest, needs and development status of individuals. It is considered that in teaching it is necessary to take the natural education of individuals into account and arrange teaching to suit the natural education of individuals. Thus, it is considered that including games in teaching learning processes shall make lessons more interesting and stimulate students (Açıkgöz, 2006, p. 145,146). Game teaching can be discussed in three stages. These are introducing the game, implementing the game, and evaluating the game.

**Introducing the Game:** An effort is made to motivate the children for the game by saying the name of the game. Through the explanation of the rules of the game, the materials to be used in the game are introduced to the children. The duration of the game and duties of the players or characters in the game are explained. It is important at the beginning of the game that the students are eager to play the game and moves of the determined game are performed by students eager to play the game. Participation of all students in the game should be encouraged (Koçyiğit, Tuğluk & Kök, 2007, p.338).

**Implementing the Game:** The game must be tried once by the teacher or eager students. Afterwards, the game must be played in turns. In addition to adhering to the rules in the game, there should also be some flexibility to a certain extent. Various reinforcements should be used at the end of the game (cited by Koçyiğit, Tuğluk & Kök, 2007).

**Evaluation of the Game:** Evaluation is an important element of education and teaching. Evaluation of game activities is also important. For the purpose of a conscious evaluation, in addition to taking planning, teaching, teaching properties, teaching methods, and implementation into consideration, various factors related to the development and growth of children should also be taken into consideration and the children should be regularly monitored by the teacher (cited by Koçyiğit, Tuğluk & Kök, 2007).

2. Methodology

The sample of the study consists of 80 students, who are studying at the Balıkesir University, Necatibey Education Faculty, Department of Primary Education during the 2010-2011 academic year and have taken the Social Studies Teaching course. Two sample applications selected by the researchers among 20 games, which are both unique and considered to be suitable for the social studies lesson, have been included in the study. The selected applications have been examined in two sections in terms of form and content. Student opinions have been included in the evaluation section. The collected data have been examined through the documentary review technique. Collecting data through analysis of existing record and documents is called documentary review. The Best technique refers to “the systematic analysis of existing records or documents as data sources” (Karasar, 2005). The sample applications below have been analyzed in three sections as form, content, and evaluation in compliance with the documentary review technique:

**Social Studies Game Application Sample 1:**

**Formal Analysis**

- **Name of the Game:** Detective
- **Duration of the Game:** 30 minutes
- **Purpose of the Game:** To have the student comprehend the implementation steps of the oral history method.
- **Unit of the Game:** I am learning my past
- **Materials and Equipment of the Game:** Lost object and note pad
- **Which Acquisition the Game is Associated with:** Composes a family history using the Oral History Method and based on objects.
- **Number of Players:** Detective, Grandfather and the whole class

**Content Analysis**

**Steps of Implementing the Game**

The teacher prepares the implementation steps of the game on the board according to the oral history method together with the students. Questions to be asked regarding the subject are prepared by the students in the class. A
student from the class is chosen as the “grandfather”. He has lost his watch that is a memorable gift from his grandfather and has the characteristic of being a historic object. He requests the students in the class to help him find his watch. The student that has been chosen as a “detective” attempts to find the lost watch by considering the questions asked by the other students in the class.

1. Determination of the Subject: Finding the lost watch
2. Determining those who shall engage in the Discussion: Grandfather, Students in the Class, Detective
3. Preparation of Questions to be asked concerning the Subject:
   a) How did you obtain this watch?  
   b) Can you describe the watch?  
   c) When and where did you lose the watch?  
   d) Did you ever lose this watch in the past? If so, when and where?  
   e) Who, are the persons associated to the incident, in other words those who saw the watch before you lost it?  
   f) Is there anyone you suspect that is associated to the watch being lost?  
   g) Which event did the watch get lost after?

4. Arranging the Discussion: Information is obtained by asking witnesses of the incident questions.
5. Arranging the information obtained through the discussion: At this stage, the detective initiates an investigation based on the information s/he has obtained. S/he helps in finding the watch and hands the watch over to its owner.

Evaluation of the Game:
This game, which is evaluated under the “I am Learning my Past” unit in the 4th Grade of Primary Education, is not just limited to the watch as an object and can be conducted by using various historical objects. Based on an object lost in the game, the students shall acquire the skills of investigating, questioning, collecting information, and arranging.

Social Studies Game Application Sample 2:

Formal Analysis

Name of the Game: Selling like hot cakes  
Duration of the Game: 30 minutes

Purpose of the Game: Ensuring the reinforcement of culture elements.  
Unit of the Game: I am learning my past

Which Acquisition the Game is Associated with:

a. Notices elements reflecting national culture in his family and environment.

b. Games, which have been commonly played by Turks in history and still exist, are exemplified.

c. Provides evidence from his/her close surroundings on the fact that Cultural Elements are transmitted from the past to present by changing.

Materials and Equipment of the Game: Headscarf, Question cards, CD.  
Number of Players: 8 students

Content Analysis
Steps of Implementing the Game

1. 8 volunteer students are selected from the class for the game.

2. The “headscarf”, which is one of our cultural elements, is given to the selected student when the music starts.

3. The headscarf is passed among students until the music stops.

4. The student, who is in possession of the headscarf as soon as the music stops, selects one of the following questions and attempts to answer it.

5. The following are questions that the student shall answer concerning our cultural elements.

a. Tell a Black Sea or Nasreddin Hodja joke.

b. Act out a traditional ceremony for “Asking a Girl’s Hand in Marriage” together with classmates you shall select.

c. Try to explain the word “Horon” without using the words Black Sea, Folk dance, and Laz in a sentence.

d. Explain the story of the “Asure (Noah’s Pudding)” to your friends.

e. Explain the word “Culture” without speaking but only drawing.

f. Explain the behavior of “Making Coffee” by miming.

g. Perform a folk dance you know (zeibek, horon, ata bari, groom’s halay).

6. The student, who answers the final question correctly and has the headscarf remaining in his/her hand, is the winner of the game.

Evaluation of the Game:
Thanks to this game conducted for the purpose of having the concept of “culture”, which is under the Primary Education 4th Grade Unit of “I am learning my past”, acquired, having students learn whilst having fun has been
taken as a basis. The content of the game has been prepared to suit the acquisition. Whilst attempting to have cultural games and cultural elements acquired, the observation skills of students have been evaluated. This game, which is based on learning whilst having fun, may ensure permanency in learning. This game may be adapted to different lessons by taking lesson contents into consideration.

3. Findings and Interpretation

When the new Social Studies Curriculum is examined, it can be observed that the new curriculum has a structure that is student centered, based on activities, and based on using teaching strategies, methods, and techniques utilized in contemporary education-teaching activities. The most important element observed in the structure of the new curriculum is the fact that it is open to different teaching strategies, methods, and techniques. Oral history works, drama, problem solving, brainstorming, and many similar understandings of education are among these activities.

Teaching through games can be considered as one of the new understandings of education that are compatible with the structure of the new social studies curriculum. Whilst, games facilitate learning, at the same time they make the process more entertaining. The most important characteristic of using games as a teaching tool is that the teacher knows in advance what shall be learnt. Within this context, the games selected in the study have been considered suitable to the acquisitions of the “I am learning my past” unit. In the activity conducted through the “Detective” game, in which there is an acquisition of composing a family history by using the oral history method in the “I am learning my past” in the Social Studies curriculum of the 4th Grade of Primary Education and based on objects, the implementation steps of the oral history method have been attempted to be acquired by the students in order during the game. In creating a national history awareness in children it is necessary to know, conserve, and transmit to following generations, the language, religion, our culture, and cultural elements. Children, who know these values, can also make sense of the life history of their nation (Sанаç, 2010; Emiroğlu, 2010). Within this context, with the acquisition in the “Selling like hot cakes” game under the “I am learning my past” unit in the Primary Education 4th Grade Social Studies Curriculum, the concepts of culture, cultural elements, traditions, and customs have been attempted to be comprehended by the students. Whilst the students are being acquired these concepts, our cultural elements such as dishes, folk dances, music, traditions, and customs have been used through games.

References

Sempozyumu. 18, 67-76.